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ABSTRACT

Problems of introducing students to innovational approaches to learning and an approach to solving those problems are discussed. The authors stress that students' definitions of classroom and school reality are powerful factors in the negotiation of educational change. If innovation is introduced in classrooms via lecture alone, the result is that the teacher disseminates information in terms of the new framework, whereas pupils decode information in terms of the old. An example is given in which a teacher tried to introduce discussion-based work with 14-year-old students. The result was a stalemate because students could not perceive a change from the conventional authority based relationship of teacher and learner. The paper concludes that video instruction, which by its nature demands a passive audience, is the ideal tool to introduce educational change to students. This medium gives them sufficient sense of the alternative method to provide the basis for discussion. The authors are currently using the video method to introduce programs of curricular innovation in schools in England. (Author/KC)

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INTRODUCING INNOVATION TO PUPILS

A paper presented at the 1980 AERA Conference, Boston, USA, by Charles Hull and Jean Rudduck, Centre for Applied Research in Education, University of East Anglia, Norwich, England.

Studies of the dissemination process have drawn analogies with other fields, such as agriculture and industry, and have concluded that the understanding and motivation of the teachers are crucial for successful innovation. Research into problems of innovations has tended to concentrate on barriers to change in the professional group. (See for instance Gross et al, 1971; Herron, 1971; MacDonald and Rudduck, 1971; Sarason 1971; Thier, 1971; Rudduck, 1976; MacDonald and Walker, 1976; Becher and Maclure 1978). Action programmes in the dissemination and implementation of innovation have led to the conclusion, a correct one we think, that special training arrangements are necessary if teachers are to implement innovations.

SP 012 553

MacDonald and Walker (1976) have described a process of 'curriculum negotiation' as taking place between a project team and a variety of audiences. That such negotiation occurs, perhaps crucially at the final 'point of sale', the classroom, is generally overlooked. (See Smetherham, 1976; Stubbs and Delamont, 1976; Keddie, 1971; Whitty and Young, 1976). Two quotations from pupils interviewed by the Humanities Curriculum Project evaluation team suggest that attention to negotiation with pupils who, trapped in their old interpretations of the situation may well constitute a barrier to change, could be crucial.

> You can't expect miracles. It's like going in and teaching the two-times table, you can't expect them to learn right away. You've got to get used to it first. The teacher should have known that.
>
> You suddenly get dumped in the deep end. Suddenly they say they are going to teach us as adults after teaching us as babies for years.

The investigators have encountered similar reactions to the introduction of MAN: A COURSE OF STUDY, and of open-plan buildings in a primary school. In the context of a study of SCISP Smetherham, (1976) has observed that changes cannot be effected in the structure of school knowledge without taking account of pupils' expectations.

In short, there is mounting evidence for the view that pupils' definitions of classroom and school reality are powerful bids in the negotiation of change, whether to the classification of school knowledge, or the framing of its transmission.

Classroom culture is an accomplishment. What counts as reality in the classroom achieves that status as the result of an ongoing collaboration between pupils and teachers. Members collaborate in the construction of histories which will give sense to the present and allow planning for the future.

> Each group (i e a class in a school) has a sub-culture of its own, a selected and modified version of some parts of the larger culture (i e the school) ... without its own culture no group would be more than a plurality, a congaries of individuals. The common meanings, the definitions of the situation, the norms of belief and behaviour - all these go to make up the culture of the group. (Olmsted, 1959, p. 84) (Our parentheses)

Any one moment of a privatised classroom culture fulfils several apparently opposed functions. Each event is an actual confirmation of abstract models of what can count as classroom. Each event is a sign of agreement as to the existence of such models, and an impulse for their development. There is an exact analogy here with the act of speaking. Each speech event is unique, growing from a unique personal history in response to a unique situation. And yet each speech event confirms and signifies the existence of grammatical structures. Each event draws on models of meaning, imagery and thought built into those structures during the course of the history of the language community. And adds to them. Each utterance is magnificently a confirmation and a reconstruction of all that has gone before.

'Normal' development in classrooms is similar, in that it is piecemeal, resulting from the diversity of unsung inputs from individual teachers and pupils, each expressing a unique experience of classroom life, and its possibilities. All languages were designed this way. It has proved so successful a design method because it makes use of small change events, none of which is threatening in itself to the whole. On the contrary, each event, though it acts as a minute impulse for change, confirms massively the 'known' past.

'Innovation' in classrooms is different, reflecting in the sphere of education society's shift in favour of designer's design. It is planned, centralised, and makes at best, optimal use of expertise and communal experiences. It is arguably the means of classroom development most suited to an education system at work for a society so complex and fast changing as our own.

For planned innovation to be successful, however, the pedagogical models in the minds of the designers must become transparently real to members of the target culture. In so far as an educational innovation involves changes to a classroom culture it is non-negotiable within the terms of that culture.

Innovation cannot therefore be effected in classrooms via the means of talk alone. Attempts to explain the innovative ideal prior to creation of a shared field of understandings can only result in pollution of the design. The teacher goes forward expecting classroom events to evidence negotiation of moves within the new framework. Actually events are more likely to amount to a negotiation of the validity of the framework itself, vis-a-vis the traditional and accepted model. Our experience is that in the early stages of an innovation a teacher proceeds in just this manner, as though the changed field of interaction is in fact a shared field against which utterances and actions automatically have new meanings for the pupils. Thus the teacher behaves intending meanings to be ascribed in terms of the new framework, whereas pupils decode information in terms of the old.

On the ground the story may go something like this :

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Progress with discussion was negligible for some

> months. I had offered an explanation of the new approach at my first meeting with the group in rather abstract terms of 'discussion'; 'pupils' responsibility'; 'opportunity to think for your selves'; 'the teacher as chairman'. Each week at the start of the session I repeated the explanation. The group soon learned the 'name' of the 'lesson' and were able to write 'Humanities Curriculum Project' on their folders.
>
> My taking a chairman's role and sitting at the rectangle of desks alongside the pupils marked a change from the conventional authority-based relationship of teacher and taught. The pupils had no sense of any alternative convention, however, for they could not realise the form of discussion for a long enough period of time to perceive what the alternative convention might be. In this limbo world, behaviours that were normally suppressed, or if expressed would constitute a direct challenge to the authority of the teacher were given free rein. Moreover, in adopting the role of the chairman I had cut myself off from the conventional means of control that the behaviour of the group would certainly have elicited in a normal teaching situation. We seemed to have arrived at stalemate in terms of progress with discussion. There was an unflagging impulse towards small talk and against this backcloth of perpetual and seemingly mindless motion there stood out a number of attention-seeking incidents which custom never seemed to stale. Maintaining my role was a severe strain. I could understand why teachers might give up.
>
> (Jean Rudduck recounts an experience of introducing discussion-based work with 14 year old pupils in a comprehensive school).

In a sense this situation is revolutionary, in that it represents a clash of two complete cultures between which no discussion is possible. Attempts to 'ease' things forward in such a situation can only result in compromise with regard to the innovative ideal or, as in this case, a painful stalemate. For the situation to be broken, some way must be found to encourage pupils to suspend disbelief and jump into the unknown.

In the case of the acceptance of innovation by teachers, the expertise of curriculum designers provides the main stimulus for the leap. There are others, operating within institutions by means of career structures and so forth, but cases seem to indicate that teacher acceptance of innovation is closely coordinated with attendance at courses run by curriculum developers.

It seems unlikely that the expertise of curriculum planners would prove much of an inducement to pupils to suspend disbelief, even were it feasible for the two groups to meet. At the level of the classroom the task of induction is clearly the teachers's. How should the teacher proceed ?

Our thinking draws on Bruner's analysis of the means of human communication :

> Human beings have three different systems, partially translatable one into the other, for representing reality. One is through action. We know some things by knowing how to do them; to ride bicycles, tie knots, swim and so on. A second way of knowing, is through imagery and those products of mind that, in effect, stop the action and summarize it in a representing ikon ... It is still true that a thousand words scarcely exhaust the richness of a single image. Finally, there is representation by symbol, of which the prototype is language with its rules for forming sentences not only about what exists in experience, but, by its powerful combinatorial techniques, for forming equally good ones about what might or might not exist. Each of these modes has its own skills ... its own virtues and defects ...
>
> (Jerome Bruner 'The Perfectability of Intellect', in Knowing among Men : A Study of Behaviour, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1966.

It is characteristic of audio-visual images of reality that their pungency lies in audience recognition. As Walker points out, 'Video ... carries within it a certain authority ... is naturally a medium demanding a passive audience'. For this reason he argues, it is a poor tool for the elicitation of members' interpretations of experienced events. For the very same reasons, however, it would seem to be the ideal instrument with which to represent the form of an innovation to pupils; to give them sufficient sense of the alternative culture to provide the basis for discussion.

Our project sets out to test this idea in practice. We are working with four schools, two of which are about to introduce the sixth

form and two of which are about to introduce programmes of curricular innovation. In each case our aim will be to assist in mounting induction courses for pupils who will be involved in the planned change. The courses will centre on audio-visual representation of the new form of working, which will provide the starting point for group discussion. In addition to providing the resources, research workers will be present at the induction sessions, but as observers only. Responsibility for the detailed design and staging of the sessions will be with the teachers involved. Pupils' perceptions of the changes will be monitored by means of interview before and during their first encounter with the new style of working. In this way we hope to build a picture of innovation from the pupil's viewpoint, and so be able to make firm suggestions as to ways of assisting the passage of change in classrooms, thus increasing the life chances of attempted innovations.

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